



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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TO: Department of Social Services Employees

FROM: Diane Benedetto
Director of Finance & Administration

DATE: December 3, 2013

SUBJECT: Code of Ethics

As Department of Social Services employees, we share an enormous responsibility. We manage billions of tax dollars, we work with confidential information that is extremely sensitive and we have financial relationships with thousands of private entities including medical providers, not-for-profit organizations and private businesses. Given this responsibility, I feel it is important to reiterate a strong Code of Ethics for all department employees. Integrity and inspiring public confidence are agency core values. The Code of Ethics is intended to remind each employee of his or her responsibility to conduct oneself in a manner that reinforces and supports these shared values.

The "Code of Ethics for Public Officials" is set forth in Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 10, Part 1, Section 1-79 through 1-90. These sections prescribe proper conduct for state employees and officials in the discharge of their employment. This memorandum is to draw your attention to the Code of Ethics statutes and to clearly define the policies of the department consistent with the Code of Ethics and other relevant statutes concerning outside employment or business involvement, the solicitation or acceptance of gifts and gratuities and the proper handling of confidential and sensitive information.

Recent interpretations issued by the State Ethics Commission pursuant to the Code of Ethics have held that state employees must avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest between their state jobs and other jobs which they may hold.

If there is deemed to be a violation of the Code of Ethics, the employee may be required to give up either his or her outside employment or state position or take other appropriate steps in order to resolve the Code of Ethics violation. In extreme cases, employees who are not in compliance with the Code of Ethics will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from state service.

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In order that we may all avoid possible violations of the Code of Ethics, it is necessary that we be aware of any situations in which there is a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest. With this in mind all employees of the Department of Social Services are advised to be especially aware of the following prohibitions of the Code of Ethics:

No employee of the Department of Social Services shall use or distribute state information or use state equipment (which includes but is not limited to computers and the e-mail system) or materials for other than state business purposes. Much of the information used by the agency is confidential. Employees shall not use any information available from computer printouts, computer terminals, client records, microfiches, microfilms or from any other source except when directly connected to the administration of our programs. Any misuse or unauthorized release of information or equipment may result in disciplinary action.

No employee of the Department of Social Services shall use their position in this agency to enable themselves, family members or friends to qualify for and/or benefit from DSS programs or programs operated by other state agencies. The Code of Ethics specifically prohibits the use of positions for financial gain of any kind to an employee or his/her family.

No employee of the Department of Social Services shall either individually or as a member of a group, directly or indirectly, solicit or accept any gift or gratuity from any person or organization that is considered to be a contractor or recipient of funds or services from departmental programs or an applicant for such funds or services, since such acceptance may cause or create the appearance of a conflict with, or influence the performance of, the employee's duties with the department. Any gift or gratuity must be refused or returned or if appropriate donated to a charitable organization so as not to benefit the employee. The only exception recognized is for items which have negligible monetary value (e.g. calendars imprinted with the company name, coffee and danish). Any questions regarding what types of items are acceptable and what types are not should be directed to the Office of Legal Counsel, Regulations and Administrative Hearings.

No employee of the Department of Social Services shall either individually or as a member of a group, directly or indirectly, solicit or accept any gift or gratuity from any person or organization with whom he or she has, has had, or may expect to have, a business relationship which could cause or create the appearance of a conflict with, or influence the performance of the employee's duties with the department.

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No employee may solicit or accept any gifts or gratuities from contractors, providers or clients. Any gift or gratuity must be refused or returned or if appropriate donated to a charitable organization so as not to benefit the employee. The only exception recognized is for items which have negligible monetary value (e.g. calendars imprinted with a company name, coffee and danish). Any questions regarding what types of items are acceptable and what types are not should be directed to the Office of Legal Counsel, Regulations and Administrative Hearings.

It is, therefore, the policy of this department that any of its employees who are engaged in employment with another person, firm or corporation which is under contract with or providing services to the Department of Social Services or which might be affected by department policies or actions, must notify their regional administrator, director or manager in writing of their involvement with such person, firm or corporation and the nature of the relationship with the person, firm or corporation. This notification will provide an opportunity for a further review by departmental officials of the degree of potential conflict of interest, if any, and permit appropriate actions, if necessary. Such employees may be asked to sign a statement indicating that there is not a violation of the Code of Ethics and or a conflict of interest.

No employee of the Department of Social Services shall allow any other employment or enterprise to take precedence over his/her responsibility to the department.

Any provision of necessary expenses for work-related travel and/or conference attendance which is not provided by agency funds or union funds, must be reported to the Ethics Commission within 30 days of receiving a reportable payment or reimbursement by utilizing the ETH-NE Form (*attached*).

The aforementioned policies apply to all employees of the Department of Social Services, and it shall be the responsibility of each employee to be familiar with them and to comply with them. To that end each employee will be given a copy of the Code of Ethics. Employees who do not comply with the above policies or who are found to have violated the Code of Ethics may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from state service.

If employees have questions regarding the information contained in this policy, please feel free to contact the Office of Legal Counsel, Regulations and Administrative Hearings.

We have an excellent department with dedicated, competent staff, and I believe that these measures simply reiterate what is the norm for responsible and professional conduct. It is important that all of us maintain the highest ethical and professional standards in the discharge of our duties.

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
CODE OF ETHICS**

My signature below indicates that I have received a copy of the Department of Social Services "Code of Ethics".

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to become familiar with this Code of Ethics policy and that failure to comply will subject me to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Name (*please print*)

Date

Signature